9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
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are allowed greater freedom in the choice as well as in the divorce of husbands (*sambandhakárans*), and the females in the family do not interfere in their freedom so long as it does not produce any domestic scandal. The orthodox view is that, as the woman is not independent, she seldom thinks of relinquishing the husband. Arbitrary divorce is thus discouraged, and adultery is a grave social offence. A wife, who is disputatious, who steals her husband's property, who favours another than her husband, who converses with strangers, who is gluttonous, who enters strange houses, should be put away even though she may have born ten sons. Litigation between two families and disagreement between a husband and wife are also the causes. Social stigma follows the adulterer, and the adulteress loses her status in society.

A Nayar woman has to observe certain ceremonies during her first pregnancy. First during and after the seventh month of pregnancy, she bathes and worships the deity in the temple every morning, and eats before her morning meal, a small quantity of butter, over which holy *mantrams* have been recited by the temple priest or by Nambuthiris. This is done generally till delivery. *Pulikudi* (tamarind juice drinking) is an indispensable ceremony performed for every pregnant woman, by the rich and poor alike, on an auspicious day, in the ninth month of pregnancy. An auspicious day, nay, even the very hour, is fixed by the astrologer. The ceremony opens by the planting of a twig of the *ambázha* tree (Spondias mangifera) on the morning of the day of the ceremony in the inner court-yard (*nadumittam*) or the northern wing of the house. At the appointed hour (*muhúrtam*), the pregnant woman, after having been bathed and properly attired, is conducted to the northern block of the house (*vatikkini*) where she is seated facing eastwards. The *Ammáyi* or the uncle's wife, whose presence on the occasion is essential, goes to the court-yard, and plucking a few leaves of the planted twig, squeezes a few drops of its juice into a cup. This she hands over to the brother, or uncle, if any, of the pregnant woman. It is necessary that the brother should wear a gold ring on his right hand ring-finger. Holding a country knife (*pisánkatti*) in his left hand, with its point towards the north, he pours the tamarind juice over his knife with his right hand three times

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841 menstruation. While in her period, she may not eat or
783 drink with any other member of the taravād, and on the
[613] fourth day she must be purified. Purification is known as māttu (change), and it is effected by the washerwoman, who, in some parts of South Malabar, is of the Mannān or Vannān caste, whose *métier* is to wash for the Nāyars and Nambūtiris, but who is, as a rule, the washerwoman of the Tīyan caste, giving her, after her bath, one of her own cloths to wear (māttu, change of raiment) instead of the soiled cloth, which she takes away to wash. Pollution, which may come through a death in the family, through child-birth, or menstruation, must be removed by māttu. Until it is done, the woman is out of caste. It must be done in the right way at the right moment, under pain of the most unpleasant social consequences. [689] How that the influential rural local magnate wreaks [613] vengeance on a taravād by preventing the right person giving māttu to the women is well known in Malabar. He could not, with all the sections of the Penal Code at his disposal, inflict greater injury. Now the Nāyar woman is said to feel compelled to remain in Malabar, or within her own part of it, in order to be within reach of māttu. My informant tells me that, the Vannān caste being peculiar to Malabar, the Nāyar women cannot go where these are not to be found, and that māttu must be done by one of that caste. But I know, from my own observation in the most truly conservative localities, in Kurumbranād for example, where the Nāyar has a relative superiority, that the washerman is as a rule a Tīyan; and I cannot but think that the interdiction has other roots than those involved in māttu. It does not account for the superstition against crossing water, which has its counterparts elsewhere in the world. The origin of the interdiction to cross the river southwards